

media release

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NOXIOUS WEED ALERT: ***Myrtle Spurge***

LAKEWOOD, Colo. – The Colorado Department of Agriculture works to stop the spread of noxious weeds across the state through a coordinated effort to detect and eradicate new invaders as well as manage well-established species. Currently, there are 74 species of plants in the state that are designated "noxious," meaning they pose a threat to the state's agricultural productivity, wildlife habitat and native plant communities.

This month, we feature a noxious weed that can be toxic to people and animals: *Myrtle Spurge*.



Photos by Kelly Uhing

FACT SHEET: www.colorado.gov/ag/myrtlespurge

LOCATION: Myrtle Spurge is found mostly in Jefferson County and the Denver Metro area with minor populations in El Paso, Larimer and Garfield counties. There are additional small scattered populations throughout the state.

TREATMENT: The key to effective control of myrtle spurge is to remove plants prior to seed set and to detect and remove new populations in natural areas early on. Small areas can be easily removed by mechanical means but should be done before the plant produces seed, as the plants can propel seeds up to 15 feet away. Hand pulling or digging when soil is moist works well for smaller populations. Make certain to pull all the roots and wear gloves and eye protection to protect yourself from the toxic milky sap.

WHAT YOU CAN DO: If you see this plant, please contact your county weed management program or CDA. County weed programs are a tremendous resource for treatment of specific weeds in specific counties. Find your county contact at www.colorado.gov/ag/coweedcontacts. You can also email CDA at Steve.Ryder@state.co.us.

BACKGROUND: Myrtle spurge contains a toxic, milky sap which can cause severe skin irritations, including blistering. This plant is poisonous if ingested; causing nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. Wearing gloves, long sleeves, shoes, and eye protection is highly recommended when in contact with myrtle spurge, as all plant parts are considered poisonous.

It was a very popular plant in xeriscapes and rock gardens, preferring sunny to partly sunny areas and well drained soils. It was too well-adapted to our soils and climate and has become a significant invasive pest. Myrtle spurge rapidly escapes gardens and invades natural areas, hillsides and other sensitive ecosystems, out competing native vegetation and reducing wildlife forage.

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